

20 Oct 58

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[redacted]
c/o Editorial Board
Studies in Intelligence

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Dear [redacted]

Your reply to Mr. Tidwell's article in the summer issue of Studies in Intelligence leads me to suspect that you are more of a sabre man than a foils devotee. In your game of fencing with ideas you have applied the blade with gusto, but in your enthusiasm I am afraid that you have neglected your opponent's point and that it is now waving dangerously over your head.

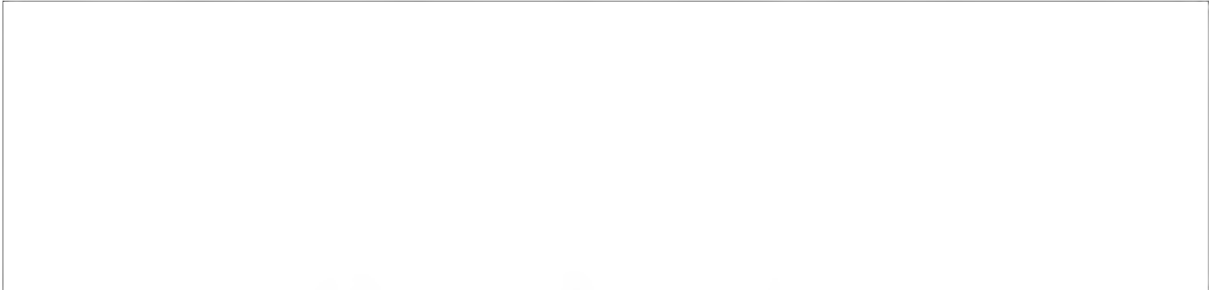
Just to be sure that you and I are fencing our own match on the same mat I will recapitulate what I believe to be the main points of "Kim or Major North". I will then explain why I think you have exposed yourself unnecessarily.

Mr. Tidwell said that it is essential that America understand people who live in alien cultures and that if American intelligence personnel do not understand them, nobody else will. He pointed out the natural, human difficulties that must be overcome if we are to think our way into another culture, and listed a number of additional, artificial barriers that we have created for ourselves. He then suggested a number of ways that might help to make it easier for our people to work toward overcoming cultural barriers. His most important point, however, was that we should recognize the need to understand other cultures and to consider this understanding as the goal toward which our personnel policies and operational procedures should be oriented.

Your use of the term "Procrustean" in this connection is mystifying. Far from recommending uniform conduct, Mr. Tidwell was recommending agreement on a common goal toward which individuals would work according to their personal attributes and the needs of a given situation. Ca va sans dire.

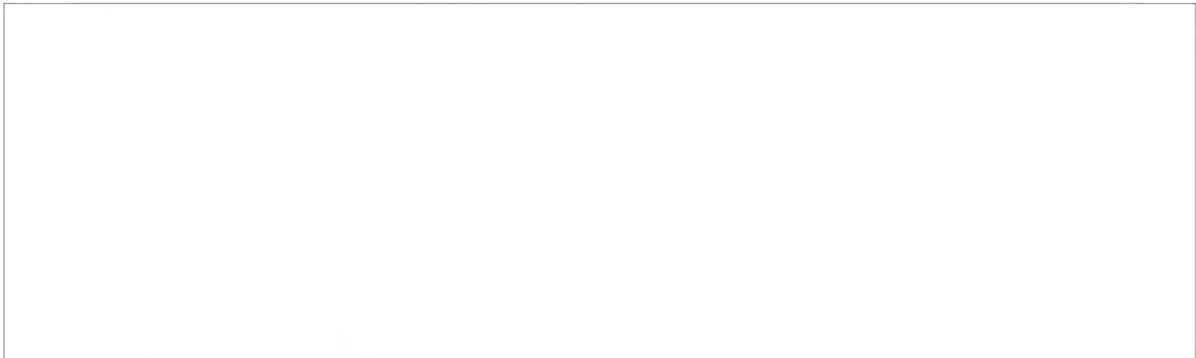
You advocate asking Arabs about Arab plots. Mr. Tidwell was suggesting ways in which it would be easier and more profitable to ask Arabs about Arab plots.

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Your comments about curved dictionaries are all too typical of the difficulty that we have in thinking our way out of American culture. It is very hard for us to talk about sex without a snicker.



Mr. Tidwell's article attacked a problem that has come to mind frequently in recent months. The same problem in somewhat different context has been raised in the recently published book, "The Ugly American". I think that he has suggested some ideas that should be thought about seriously. He may not have the right answers, but please, sir, do not be a sabre-wielding Pangloss.

Sincerely yours,

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cc: W. A. Tidwell